

Message Text

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65

ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 8143

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

USMISSION USUN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 0256

ABIDJAN FOR REDSO; NIAMEY FOR RDO; DEPT PASS ALSO AID/AFR/CWR

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, DM, US

SUBJ: AMBASSADOR SUBJECTED TO BENIN "PEOPLE'S COURT"

REF COTONOU -63,

1. AFTER KEREKOU DISMISSED ME THIS MORNING, I WAS ASKED TO RETURN AT 1600 LOCAL TIME FOR SOME KIND OF "ARRANGED CONFRONTATION." I WAS MADE TO WAIT ONE HOUR IN A STEAMING LITTLE ROOM, ON THE PRETEXT THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD NOT GOT BACK FROM LUNCH. THEN I WAS TAKEN TO ANOTHER ROOM WHERE I WAS SUBJECTED TO A TWO-HOUR GRILLING BY WHAT IS USUALLY CALLED HERE "UNE COMMISSION D'ENQUETE" (A COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY, A POLITICALLY-ORIENTED TRIBUNAL). HOWEVER NO ONE PRESENT ACTUALLY GAVE THE GROUP A NAME. IT WAS REALLY A "PEOPLE'S COURT" WITH MYSELF AS THE ACCUSED. (I DID NOT SEE KEREKOU AT ALL IN THE AFTERNOON).

2. FORNMIN ALLADAYE WAS CHAIRMAN OF THIS KANGAROO SETUP, BUT SAID LITTLE AND DID NOT BRIDLE THE OTHERS. ALTHOUGH HE MADE SOME NASTY STATEMENTS ABOUT MY INTEGRITY AND MY ABILITIES AS
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AN AMBASSADOR, FOR THE MOST PART HE LET TWO IDEOLOGICAL

"INQUIEITORS" FIRE QUESTIONS AT ME (I SUSPECT THEY ARE FROM THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE PARTY). NEITHER OF THE INQUISITORS WOULD GIVE ME HIS NAME, ON GROUND THEY WERE ON STATE BUSINESS, AND THEY DID NOT CARE WHAT MY NAME WAS. CAKPO OF FORNMINISTRY WAS PRESENT TO PROVIDE BRIEFING ON THE INDEMNIFICATION ISSUE. I HAD TO FILL IN MOST DETAILS FOR HIM AND CORRECT HIS MISTAKES EVEN THOUGH HE SPOKE FROM FILES. THE INQUISITORS (BOTH ILL INFORMED) QUESTIONED ME ABOUT CONTENTS OF AIDE MEMOIRE (TRYING TO EXPAND OR TWIST MEANING OF EVERY SENTENCE), TESTED MY PERSONAL VIEWS TOWARD BENIN, INSINUATED FREQUENTLY THAT I WAS LYING, IMPUTED UNFRIENDLY MOTIVES ON MY PART, BERATED AN AMERICAN AID PROGRAM (CATHOLIC RELIEF), DECLARED IT WAS IMPROPER FOR ME TO GIVE AIDE MEMOIRE TO PRESIDENT, AND IN MANY WAYS TRIED TO ESTABLISH THAT I WAS NOT DOING MY JOB PROPERLY OR WAS HARMING BENIN'S INTERESTS. THEY DID THEIR BEST TO TANGLE ME UP OR CATCH ME IN INCONSISTENCY. SINCE NONE OF THEM WAS WELL INFORMED OR BRIGHT, IT WAS EASY TO SLAUGHTER THEM WITH CRISP ANSWERS AND EXACT DETAIL.

3. AT CONCLUSION, THE BENINESE PRESENT SAID I WOULD HAVE TO SIGN MEMORANDUM OF THE MINUTES OF THE INQUIRY. I DECLINED ON THE GROUND THAT IT WAS IMPROPER FOR AN AMBASSADOR TO SIGN THE PROCEEDINGS OF ANY KIND OF TRIBUNAL OF ANOTHER COUNTRY. A GREAT DEAL OF NASTINESS ENSUED. IT WAS ALLEGED THAT I WOULD OFFEND THE POSITION AND PERSON OF THE PRESIDENT IF I FAILED TO SIGN THE RECORD THAT WAS TO BE COMPOSED. I AFFIRMED THAT I HAD EVERY RESPECT FOR THE PRESIDENT OF BENIN, BUT I WOULD NOT SIGN ANY DOCUMENT. AS I MADE FOR THE DOOR, ONE OF MY INQUISITORS GOT IN THE WAY AND WAS SO UNCIVIL ABOUT TAUNTING ME THAT I SAID FIRMLY "SIR, I WOULD REMIND YOU THAT I AM THE AMBASSADOR OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA." WITH A SNEER HE RETORTED THAT THAT MADE NO DIFFERENCE IN BENIN.

4. DURING THE COURSE OF THE INQUISITION, FOREIGN MINISTER CAUTIONED ME TO BE CAREFUL AND MIND MY CONDUCT; I SHOULD MEND MY WAYS. HIS GOVT CONSIDERED ME TO BE MUCH INFERIOR TO MY PREDECESSOR, AND IT WAS WATCHING ME CLOSELY. SEVERAL TIMES DURING THE PROCEEDINGS, WHEN IT WAS APPROPRIATE FOR ME TO SPEAK, ALLADAYE TOLD ME TO KEEP QUIET.

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5. AFTER THE "PEOPLE'S COURT" BROKE UP, I TOLD ALLADAYE THAT I WAS PROPOSING TO THE DEPT THAT I SPEND A FEW WEEKS IN WASHINGTON ON CONSULTATION. HE EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT IT WAS A GOOD IDEA (I DID NOT TELL HIM I ALREADY HAD ORDERS, BECAUSE I WANTED TO KEEP MY OPTIONS OPEN A FEW DAYS). HE ASKED ABOUT AN ENVOY FROM AID AND I SAID USEFULNESS OF SUCH A VISIT WAS STILL UNDER STUDY.

6. COMMENT: IT APPEARS NOW, AFTER MY INCREDIBLE ADVENTURES TODAY, THAT I MAY BE IN BUSINESS HERE A WHILE LONGER. THE AIDE MEMOIRE MADE IT POSSIBLE TO LIFT THE PRESSURE A BIT.

7. THE RATHER BARBARIC TREATMENT I RECEIVED AT HANDS OF PRESIDENT THIS MORNING AND THE SOVIET-TYPE INQUEST CHAIRED BY FORNMINISTER I UNDERWENT THIS AFTERNOON MUST SURELY BE COUNTED AMONG THE MOST OUTRAGEOUS EXPERIENCES ANY AMERICAN CHIEF OF MISSION HAS EVER UNDERGONE AT THE HANDS OF THE TOP LEADERSHIP OF ANOTHER GOVT. HOWEVER I MAINTAINED MY DIGNITY THROUGHOUT AND I RECOLLECT WITH SATISFACTION THE MANY SOLID PUNCHES I GOT IN. IN FACT I DO NOT RECALL ANY POINT THAT MY TORMENTERS MADE STICK.

8. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS REASONABLE AND PROPER AT THIS POINT FOR USG TO CONSIDER WHETHER WE SHOULD REMAIN AT ALL IN A COUNTRY WHOSE PRESIDENT AND FORNMINISTER TREAT THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE MANNER DESCRIBED ABOVE.

9. DEPT SHOULD NOT BE CONCERNED ABOUT OUR STATE OF NERVES OR DURABILITY. I LIKE THE KIND OF FREE-FOR-ALL DESCRIBED ABOVE, IF IT IS THRUST UPON ME, AND I AM READY TO TAKE AND DISH OUT A LOT MORE PUNISHMENT. END COMMENT

10. WILL SEND MORE COMPLETE REPORT TOMORROW (IT IS NOW 10 PM HERE) INCLUDING ALL OF THE SUBSTANCE.
ENGLE

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